

# Flat-out ingenious

*From the artful to the incognito, solutions emerge for gracefully integrating flat-panel TVs into a home's decor.*

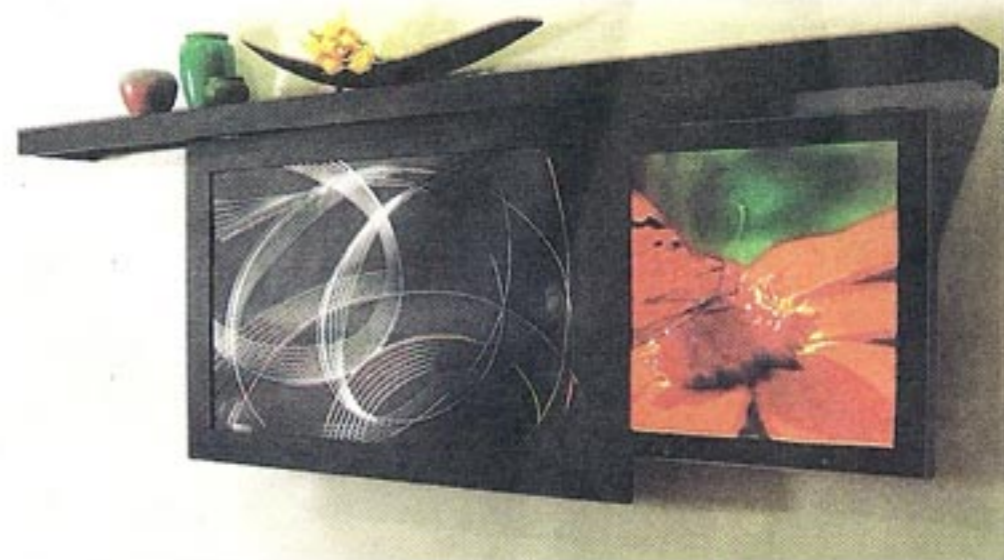
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SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS

**A** television, at least when it is turned on, is logically the star of any room. But when the screen powers down, shouldn't the black portal somehow be subdued so that interior decor, art and furnishings can shine?

In this time of ever-more-affordable flat-panel LCD and plasma TVs, rooms increasingly are being equipped with — and often overwhelmed by — big screens mounted to the wall or above the fireplace.

While many techno-philes love to boast their pixel prowess by prominently displaying their flat panels, on or off, in any room, other buyers are seeking new ways to conceal or beautify TVs when they are not being watched.

One beauty of flat panels is that they can be covered, lifted, tilted, recessed or rotated far more easily than their bulky predecessors. And manufacturers suddenly are crafting myriad ingenious methods for limiting a flat TV's impact on a room — or for transforming a lifeless panel into an artistic expression.



Jason Lahman/TV2ART

TV2ART's "Lightscope" works as stand-alone art or, when a TV is on behind the silk-screened panel, an ever-changing light show is created.

## Now you see it ...

Local builder Dan Cooper, of DC Fine Homes, created something of a showcase for creative flat-panel placements in his "Virtuosity" house in southwest Eugene, which was part of the Home Builders Association of Lane County's 2007 Tour of Homes. Cooper packed the 5,200-square-foot spec house with artisan touches, evident in the installation of some of its 12 LCD and plasma TVs.

When not in use, one screen in the living room can be manually rotated and slid back into a wall cabinet. In its place are bookshelves, leaving no clue of the TV behind them. The rotating mechanism — developed by Reversica Design, a Santa Cruz, Calif. company — allows the TV-centric cabinet wall to be transformed into a continuous span of shelves for displaying books, photos, vases and art pieces.

"You're always trying to find a different way to hide the TV," says Cooper, who discovered Reversica at a trade show in Orlando and spent hours demonstrating it for visitors during the Lane County home tour last July.

At the request of the home's eventual buyer, Cooper also installed a remote-operated power lift to conceal a TV in an upstairs sitting area. The space overlooks the light-filled foyer and has the feeling of a secluded, quiet reading area, with its own fireplace.



Bookshelves on one side, TV on the other: photo sequence shows how manual "Reversica" system works.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

"We wanted to have this nice sitting area here, and he wanted to have a TV," Cooper says. With some Internet research, he found Lift It, a Gig Harbor, Wash., company that specializes in motorized lifts to extend and retract flat-panel TVs from horizontal or vertical surfaces. Installed inside the seating area's cabinetry, the lift allows the room to retain its intended purpose without the distraction of an exposed television.

In other houses, Cooper has installed TVs in bathrooms behind two-way mirrors so they're visible only when turned on, along with sets that have a reflective surface and an integrated decorative frame to resemble a mirror.

"Of course, when they're in the right spot, you don't need to hide them," Cooper emphasizes. Other TVs hang on walls and above gas fireplaces throughout his tour house; one even hangs outside over the covered patio's fireplace.

And many of the specialized inventions that can mask a flat panel don't come cheap. The Reversica and Lift It products Cooper ordered each cost in the range of \$1,000 just for the equipment, but he notes that even simple wall-mount kits for large screens can cost as much as \$500.

#### Art over technology

Other new ideas rely on beautifying, rather than concealing, flat screens.

For example, GalleryPlayer of Seattle produces collections of high-definition digital artwork and photography on DVDs and memory cards that can turn a TV screen into a static work of art or a



A push of a button exposes or conceals this sitting-room TV attached to a power lift.

slide-show gallery of changing images.

Many new flat-panel TVs have built-in memory card slots that also allow playing slide shows of the latest family photos straight out of a digital camera.

And the San Francisco company TV2ART creates silk-screened "Lightscope" art panels that slide on the rails of a modular wall unit or open in the center like hinged cabinet doors to reveal a TV behind. When in position over a TV that is turned off, the panels work as stand-alone art. When a TV is turned on behind the panels, the surface jumps to life with an ever-changing light show

that shines through the patterns printed on the material.

"Our products fuse technology and art," says Daniel Goldstein, TV2ART creator. "We give people new ways to incorporate their flat-panel TVs into their decor as well as use their TVs to create an exciting new form of dynamic colorful art that everybody can enjoy."

As of now, no Eugene-area representatives or vendors exist for most flat-panel specialty companies such as TV2ART, Reversica and Lift It; the products and installation expertise are available from the companies themselves.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION



Following is a sampling of Web sites that detail products for integrating flat-panel TVs into a room.

**reversica.com:** A range of rotating mechanisms allow hiding TVs in cabinets or making them viewable from two rooms.

**tv2art.com:** Silk-screened panels slide or open to reveal the TV; they also stand alone as art pieces in front of the TV, on or off.

**liftmytv.com:** Power, remote-operated lifts can be used to extend and retract flat-panel TVs from just about any surface.

**mediadecor.com:** Custom-framed art prints retract to reveal TVs; the company also sells lift kits and concealing mirrors.

**solarshadingsystems.com:** The VisionArt division specializes in art prints that retract into a custom frame surrounding a TV.

**framemytv.com:** Custom TV frames, with specialized matting that can hide built-in speakers, can complement any decor.

**tvcoverups.com:** Powered or manual flip-up mechanism allows a framed artwork, mirror, map, etc., to be placed over a TV.

**galleryplayer.com:** Digital collections of paintings and photography can be displayed on screen to turn TVs into wall art.

**horchow.com:** Several concealing TV wall cabinets are shown in the "media cabinets & armoires" section.

See the sidebar above for Web sites that feature some of the creative new products to hit the screen scene.

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